

6 Steps to Resolving Noise Nuisance Complaints

**A FREE
eBook from
The Noise
Experts**

A step-by-step guide on what
Housing Officers need to know when
they receive noise nuisance complaints

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Getting Started

Who is this eBook for?

Anyone that is responsible for managing tenants and handling anti-social behaviour or noise nuisance complaints.

We'll be taking a look at the steps you should follow to resolve noise nuisance complaints.

What you will achieve

After reading this guide, you will feel more confident about resolving noise nuisance complaints between neighbours.

You will also get some useful hints and tips on the right products to use in your role.

If you have any questions, make yourself heard by contacting our Noise Measurement Experts.

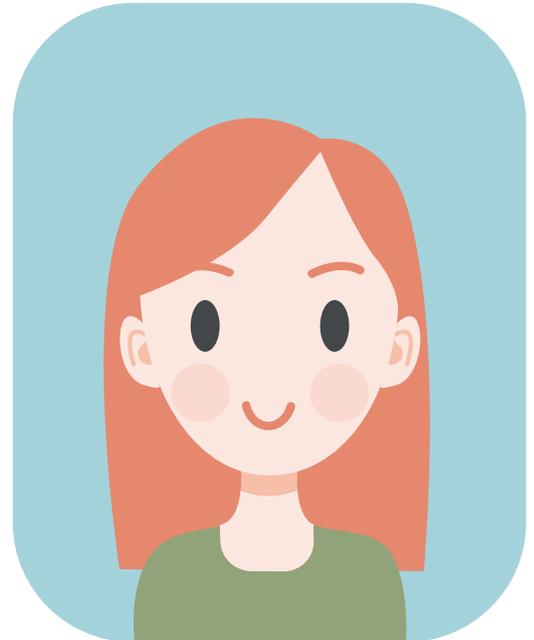
Setting the scene

You receive a complaint from a resident (the Reporter) about a noisy neighbour (the Subject).

They might leave dogs barking all day, have loud music playing or love doing DIY in the middle of the night.

How do you approach both parties to resolve this noise nuisance complaint?

First, we will guide you through a quick explanation of noise and noise nuisance before exploring the six steps to resolving complaints. Let's get started.



What is Noise?

Noise accounts for most of the complaints that Local Authorities and Housing Associations receive when it comes to anti-social behaviour, but what is it?

Definition of Noise

Noise is defined as any unwanted sound. Most sound is unwanted because it is either unexpected, too loud or repetitive in nature.

Understanding Noise

There are two important characteristics of noise: frequency and loudness.

Sound/noise is caused by pressure waves travelling through a medium. When sound travels through the air, it interacts with the atmospheric pressure.

The number of pressure variations per second determine the frequency (measured in Hertz or Hz). The higher the frequency, the higher the pitch.

The loudness is determined by the amount of pressure from the sound waves. Loudness is commonly expressed in decibels or dB.



Health Effects from Noise

Regular exposure to high noise levels or low frequency noise can be hazardous to health, leading to:

- Noise-induced hearing loss
- Tinnitus
- Hypertension
- Heart disease
- Stress
- Sleeping disorders

When Does Noise Become a Nuisance?

Determining whether a noise has become a nuisance is quite subjective. What may be interpreted as a nuisance by one person might be irrelevant to another.

Noise nuisance is defined in English law as ***“an unlawful interference with a person’s use or enjoyment of land or of some right over, or in connection, with it.”***

To be classed as a statutory nuisance, noise must be “prejudicial to health or a nuisance”. In most cases, noise nuisance from neighbours will result in stress and lack of sleep.

To ascertain whether you are dealing with nuisance noise, you will also need to know:

- The level of the noise
- The duration of the noise
- The time of day of the noise
- The persistence of the noise

Noise Nuisance in the UK

1 in 10 Britons (approx. 6.5 million people) claim they are regularly disturbed by noise from neighbouring properties.

- 28% complain to their local council
- Less than 33% complain to their neighbours directly for fear of confrontation
- 5% of those that confront their neighbour are threatened and 1% have a physical fight
- The most common complaints come from loud TVs, barking dogs, parties, DIY and arguing neighbours
- People living in flats are the most susceptible to noise nuisance
- 10% claim they had been left continually disturbed or stressed

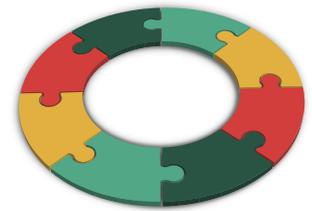


Step 1: Visit the Reporter

To resolve a noise nuisance complaint, you must first visit the Reporter to obtain the following:

Their backstory as to what has happened so far, including:

- When it started, when it happens and what causes it
- How it is affecting them
- Whether anything has changed recently to make them complain about it
- Any contact they have had with the Subject previously



Any evidence they have already gathered, including:

- Diary sheets tracking the frequency and nature of the noise
- Audio recordings
- Police incident log (date and reference)

If the Reporter has not completed a diary sheet of the noise nuisance, leave one behind and get them to start gathering the evidence you will need.

Advise them that you will contact the Subject about the noise and if this does not improve the situation then fill in the diary record.

TOP TIP

One method at this stage that can swiftly resolve the complaint is to ask the Reporter *“What can we do to solve this?”*

If they expect silence, you can manage their expectations of the result at this stage. They are likely to hear some noise going forward but it should not be at nuisance levels.

Step 2: Check the Tenancy Agreement (if applicable)

You have spoken to the Reporter and gained an understanding of their noise nuisance complaint. Before approaching the Subject, it is worth checking their tenancy agreement (if applicable) to learn:

- What the conditions of the tenancy agreement are regarding anti-social behaviour. Failure to comply with these conditions may result in the Subject being evicted or receiving an injunction to cease the actions causing the alleged noise nuisance
- Whether they are still within the first period of tenancy. If this is the case then your tools (warning letters and injunctions) could be more powerful as the tenancy has only just begun. If they are still in the first period of their tenancy, make a note of the date this expires in case you need to take quick action



TOP TIP

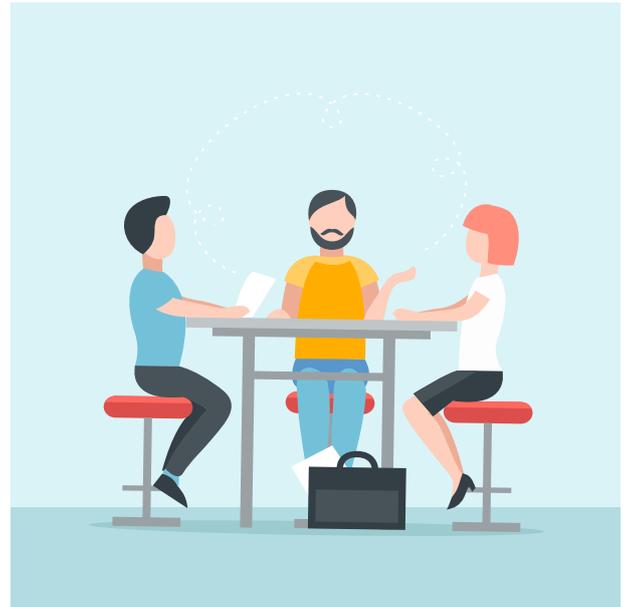
If the noise nuisance is caused by barking dogs or other pets, check that they obtained permission to keep pets in the property. If not, this is another breach of contract that could lead to potential eviction or rehoming of the pets.

Step 3: Visit the Subject

You have spoken to the Reporter to understand their issues and you know the terms and type of any tenancy agreement you are dealing with. Now, it is time to speak to the Subject.

During this visit you need to:

- Inform them that there has been a report of unacceptable noise levels and the times this has been alleged
- Explain you are not accusing them but just want to let them know that a complaint has been received
- Obtain their version of events and backstory of what has happened to create a written record for your evidence
- Tell them that if the report is founded it could mean that they are in breach of their tenancy agreement, leading to potential injunctions and in some cases, eviction



An Apology

If the Subject was not aware they were creating nuisance noise, they should apologise and state this will not happen again; relay this back to the Reporter. Monitor the situation to see if this provides a resolution.

TOP TIP

Thank the Subject for speaking with you and advise them that you will have to arrange to monitor the noise. Explain that you can then determine if the noise is reasonable or not. Ask them if you can take a contact phone number so you can update them.

Having a phone number for Subject and Reporter helps you keep in contact with them.

Step 4: Keep Communicating

At all stages of the process, it is essential you keep communicating with both the Reporter and the Subject.

Here are some suggestions for maintaining open communications:

- After every meeting or conversation you have with either party, provide a written record of what was discussed and any outcomes – this paper trail will form part of your evidence
- When communicating with the Subject, always reference the terms of the tenancy agreement so they are aware that their alleged actions could be putting them in breach of contract
- Keep both parties updated with your progress by telephone. Keep a record of these conversations.



TOP TIP

There is no such thing as too much communication in these circumstances. Keep a record of everything.

Step 5: Evidence Gathering

To decide whether the complaint is founded you will need to gather sufficient evidence. This can include:

- Diary logs from the Reporter that show the frequency, time, persistence and nature of the noise
- Confirmation letters that you have been sending to the Reporter and the Subject following any conversation you have had from them
- Evidence you have gathered using a noise nuisance recorder (a device that captures noise level data and high quality audio recordings)



Using the Evidence

Once you have gathered all the evidence, it is time to analyse and assess the information to see if the complaint is founded. Assess the severity of the complaint based on the evidence and use the information to take necessary action.

- If the complaint is founded and the Subject is in breach of their tenancy agreement, you can send warning letters, file for an injunction or build a case for eviction. Eviction is always the last step as courts try to keep tenants in their homes
- If the complaint is unfounded and the Subject is not in breach of their tenancy agreement, inform the Reporter

Your evidence might indicate that the Reporter is aggravating the Subject, causing them to generate noise nuisance.

In this case, you must speak with the Reporter to see how you can work together to solve the issue. If the activities are malicious and are causing harassment, alarm or distress, you may want to take action under anti-social behaviour legislation with the

TOP TIP

Work in partnership with your local authority if you need more support with evidence gathering.

Step 6: Using a Noise Nuisance Recorder

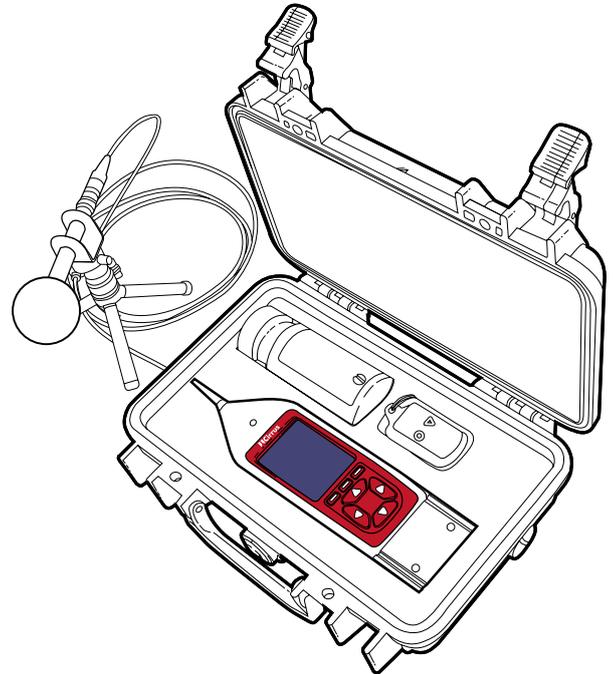
A noise nuisance recorder provides a simple solution to gathering the crucial evidence you will need to decide if the complaint is founded.

Install the equipment in the Reporter's property. This will give you evidence on the noise levels, the frequency it occurs and capture audio recordings of alleged nuisance noise.

Getting Your Data

Once your noise nuisance recorder has gathered the evidence, you need to download the data. Most noise nuisance recorders should be supplied with the relevant software to do this.

- You will now be able to analyse the data. This will be able to tell you the noise level (or loudness) or the nuisance noise, as well as how often it occurs over the monitoring period
- If your noise nuisance recorder captures audio, you will be able to playback audio recordings and hear the alleged complaint taking place
- All this data will help you determine if there is a actionable noise complaint that requires further action
- Generate reports to use as evidence, discuss with your managers or pass to third-party agencies as required



TOP TIP

Use a discreet carrying case to take the noise nuisance recorder into the Reporter's property, so that the Subject is not aware exactly when the equipment has been installed. If they see it, they may alter their behaviour.

Introducing the Trojan^{LITE} Noise Nuisance Recorder

A simple, effective way to measure noise nuisance

Cirrus has developed the Trojan^{LITE} noise nuisance recorder to help housing associations resolve noise nuisance complaints quicker and easier than ever before.

6 Reasons to Consider Trojan^{LITE}

- Capture quality evidence on noise levels, and make more informed decisions
- Record audio to ascertain what is really going on, to provide you with a more detailed understanding of the noise nuisance complaint
- Easy to deploy with no acoustic understanding required, so you can have the tools at your disposal to help residents resolve their complaints successfully
- Easy to download, analyse and report on data, allowing you to determine what action needs to be taken
- Designed, manufactured and supported in the UK with full training available
- Backed by our industry-leading 15-year warranty, so you can have complete peace of mind knowing that your investment is protected



Introducing the Trojan2 Noise Nuisance Recorder

A simple, effective way to measure noise nuisance

Cirrus has developed the Trojan2 Noise Nuisance Recorder to help Housing Associations resolve noise nuisance complaints quicker and easier than ever before.

6 Reasons to Consider Trojan²

- Capture quality evidence on noise levels, and make more informed decisions
- Record audio to ascertain what is really going on, to provide you with a more detailed understanding of the noise nuisance complaint
- Removeable handheld sound level meter included as standard, so you can conduct on-the-spot checks and other environmental noise surveys, without the need to deploy the full Trojan setup
- Easy to download, analyse and report on data, allowing you to determine what action needs to be taken
- Designed, manufactured and supported in the UK with full training available
- Backed by our industry-leading 15-year warranty, so you can have complete peace of mind knowing that your investment is protected



Customer Success Stories



Hull
City Council

Neighbourhood Enforcement Officer, Nick Tindall, has worked for Hull City Council for over 20 years in a variety of roles. He is no stranger to change when it comes to dealing with neighbourhood disputes, anti-social behaviour and noise nuisance.

“Having a Trojan is like having another officer on the team. It is discreet and we can be in and out without arousing suspicion.

It’s so easy and fast to set up we don’t waste time – it does the job of an officer where we can’t due to time constraints and not knowing how or when the noise is going to occur.

It does everything we want at the end of the day.”



At Wakefield Metropolitan District Council, Jill Edmondson is Team Leader in the Communities Environmental Health Department and has special responsibility for noise nuisance. Her team of Officers cover an area that encompasses a city centre, several towns, urban housing, industrial zones and rural settings - each bringing with it their own unique issues when it comes to noise nuisance.

“The Trojan is particularly invaluable when the noise nuisance is sporadic.

It gives us a very clear picture of what is going on. The equipment users like the remote control and being able to switch on the recorder from most rooms in the house whenever the noise starts.

We find our Trojan recorders are in constant use all year round.”

Who Are Cirrus Research?

We believe in making noise measurement simple

Cirrus Research is a world leader in the design, manufacture and supply of noise measurement instruments. Since 1970, Cirrus Research's mission has been to make monitoring noise simple, helping business and organisations protect people and the environment from the dangers of excessive noise exposure.

Today, thousands of companies around the world are using our instruments to help them comply with the standards, regulations and legislation that control noise at work and in the environment.

Our innovative approach to product design has helped redefine the way the world looks at noise measurement instruments.



Extra Support

Do you want to know about more resolving noise nuisance complaints?

Our noise measurement experts are always available to provide technical advice on the best solutions.

Online: www.cirrusresearch.co.uk

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Need Help Measuring Noise Nuisance?

Call the Noise Experts
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